# MISSOURI FAMILY LITERACY

# INDICATORS OF PROGRAM QUALITY

# AND

# STANDARDS OF PERFORMANCE

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**(revised)**

# Acknowledgements

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# INTRODUCTION

Family literacy programs in Missouri reflect efforts to help break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy by creating meaningful education opportunities for parents and their children. These programs integrate early childhood education, adult literacy (adult education and literacy or English as a second language), and parenting education into a cohesive educational experience. Family literacy programs help parents to develop communication, decision-making, interpersonal, and lifelong learning skills. Key to these goals is the program's emphasis on helping parents develop the skills they need to become full partners in their young children's education, and to assist those children, ages birth through seven, in reaching their full potential as learners.

Missouri is part of a national effort to prepare all children for school by ensuring that all are ready to learn. This goal is directly connected to adult literacy levels. Parents need to have the knowledge and skills required for their responsibilities as citizens, for participating in further learning, and to be productively employed in a modern economy. To meet these challenges parents and schools must establish partnerships in order to promote children's social, emotional, and academic growth. Even Start and other family literacy programs are the first step toward bridging homes with schools and building strong expectations for successful learning outcomes.

What should parents know and be able to do after completing a family literacy program? What should young children enrolled in family literacy programs know and be able to do in kindergarten, first and second grades? These questions can be answered by carefully studying family literacy programs that documented changes in adult's daily lives and the school achievement of their young children. The challenge is to sort through these changes by using criteria consistent with National Education Goals, the Missouri Show Me Standards, and the practical expertise of family literacy providers. Family

literacy program standards define what adults should know and be able to do associated with their responsibilities as parents of young children, workers, and responsible citizens.

These high expectations for performance are consistent with other performance and knowledge standards for high school graduates in Missouri, adult learners enrolled in Adult Education and Literacy programs, and parents participating in Parents as Teachers programs. The expectations for early childhood development and learning are reflective of professional standards advocated by the National Association of Educators of Young Children, the International Reading Association, and Head Start.

Missouri's Family Literacy Indicators of Program Quality are frameworks for determining whether a local program staff and their partners are helping all parents and children achieve their maximum potential. The Program Standards incorporate and advocate the premise that meaningful learning generates, sustains, and promotes family members' growth and development by connecting family literacy with real-life challenges.

Each of the core components of family literacy are essential for effecting lasting changes in families that promote learning and economic self sufficiency. The purpose of Missouri's Family Literacy Indicators of Program Quality (the acronym FLIPQ refers to this document) is to improve outcomes for parents and their children who participate in Even Start and other family literacy programs. These standards and indicators are designed to reflect what parents need to know and be able to do in order to identify their own priorities and make decisions relative to their responsibilities as their children's first and most important teacher. The standards also define best practices for establishing and administering flexible programs that fit their services to the needs of families.

Family literacy programs need to establish Missouri's Standards and Indicators for Family Literacy and support all program efforts to expect adult learners and their children to achieve high levels of personal learning.

## The Missouri Family Literacy Initiative

Federal Even Start funding established the Missouri Family Literacy Initiative (MOFLI) and the Missouri Family Literacy Consortium. MOFLI represents a formal collaboration of state agencies and organizations working together to plan a system for developing, supporting, and sustaining family literacy programs in Missouri. MOFLI works toward developing local family literacy programs that can be supported and sustained by state and local resources. To this effect, MOFLI is directed to institutionalize in Missouri a statewide support system for family literacy programs. The MOFLI Consortium is exercising leadership to establish family literacy as a high profile educational issue and to build Missouri's capacity to implement high-quality and sustainable family literacy programs. MOFLI's mission is to improve the educational opportunities of Missouri's low-income families and to break the intergenerational cycle of low education and poverty. To achieve its mission, MOFLI established accountability criteria for measuring program quality, standards of effective practice, and indicators of participants' performance.

## The Mission of Family Literacy in Missouri

Family literacy is a field of learning that blends intensive, long-range services in early childhood education, adult education and learning, and parental education and support. Family literacy programs work with low-economic and educationally-challenged families by bringing together parents and their children in a comprehensive educational program. Parents receive instruction, information, and support to enhance their capacity for serving as the first teacher and partner in their children's education. Parental instruction in literacy and learning leads to successful achievement of personal goals associated with an adult learner's home/family, work, and community.

## Working Definitions of Literacy and Related Terms

**Literacy.** Literacy levels are best explained with a review of standards for literacy and estimates of literacy levels for adults in Missouri. As Missouri changes and the demands on individuals, families, and businesses increase, the definition of literacy also continues to evolve. While there is a history of local concern about inadequate literacy skills, the nature of the concerns is shifting. Today, adults, including parents in family literacy programs, need higher levels of basic skills to function effectively in many areas of their lives. Furthermore, literacy is now defined more broadly to include problem solving and higher level reasoning skills. Literacy is a range of abilities that help people help themselves — and their children. It is not the sole goal of a family literacy program, but a means to improve the lives of families. In its 1991 National Literacy Act, Congress defined literacy as:

> an individual's ability to read, write, and speak in English, and compute and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job and in society, to achieve one's goals, and develop one's knowledge and potential.

The National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) created a literacy continuum on which people may fall at different places for different kinds of skills. NALS divided the continuum into 5 levels, with Level 5 reflecting the highest skills and Level 1, the lowest. Although many Level 1 adults could perform tasks involving simple texts and documents, all adults scoring at Level 1 displayed difficulty using certain reading, writing, and computational skills considered essential for daily living. At Level 1 an individual is able to sign one's name yet cannot locate eligibility from a table of employee benefits. Concerning newspapers, a Level 1 reader is able to locate one but not two pieces of information in a sports article.

**Literacy Levels of Adults in Missouri.** According to NALS, 17 percent of adults (620,000) in Missouri score at Level 1. According to the 1999 KIDS COUNT data (Annie E. Casey Foundation, www.aecf.org), Missouri continues to have a 12% statewide high school drop out rate, and 17% of children statewide continue to live in poverty.

**Family Literacy.** Family literacy is a field of learning that blends "intensive, long-range service in early childhood education, adult basic skills education, and parental education and support." (National Institute for Literacy, 1999). The National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL), a national advocacy and training organization for family literacy, applies the term "family literacy" to comprehensive programs that:

- work with at-risk families,

- bring parents and children together in pre-school classrooms to teach parents how to best fulfill their role as their children's most important teachers, and
- offer topics for study and discussion that include child nurturing, coping with child behavior, self-esteem, career options, and community resources.

The Federal Definition of Family literacy defines family literacy services as services "of sufficient intensity in terms of hours, and of sufficient duration, to make sustainable changes in a family, and that integrate all of the following activities:

1. Interactive literacy activities between parents and their children.

2. Training for parents regarding how to be the primary teacher for their children and full partners in the education of their children.

3. Parent literacy training that leads to economic self-sufficiency.

4. An age-appropriate education to prepare children for success in school and life experiences." (Reading Excellence Act, Workforce Investment Act, Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and Head Start Act).

**Early/Emergent Literacy.** According to a joint statement issued by the International Reading Association and the National Association of Educators of Young Children, emergent literacy is based on the theory that literacy learning begins at birth and is encouraged through interaction with adults in meaningful activities. Literacy behaviors evolve over time and eventually become conventional.

**Children At-Risk for Reading.** The National Reading Panel (1998) identified group risk factors associated with children's reading failure. Clusters of conditions represent individual, familial, and demographic indicators of risk. Factors associated with the census data of the population of children served include:

- They are expected to attend schools in which achievement is chronically low,
- they reside in low-income families and live in poor neighborhoods,
- they have limited proficiency in spoken English, and
- they speak a dialect of English that differs substantially from the one used in school. (p. 131-132).

## Essential Themes of High Quality Family Literacy Programs

Six common themes or purposes guide the planning of high quality family literacy programs. These programs are characterized by:

- family-centered programming with client responsive learning opportunities,
- partnerships between families and service providers,
- sufficient time to engage families with intense services,
- flexible and adaptive services tailored for individual families,
- consistent communication and continuous services, and
- cross disciplinary professional development for staff.

## Process for Developing the Standards and Indicators

Project staff members identified and integrated research from the fields of adult education, early childhood education, literacy, and social sciences that support practices associated with the four components of family literacy. Relevant literature regarding the development and assessment of program standards and performance indicators was also reviewed. Data was gathered from nine states working toward development of Indicators of Program Quality (IPQs). The data was synthesized to identify IPQs, formatting strategies, and implementation steps. Quality standards adopted by Head Start, Adult Education and Learning, the National Association of the Education of Young Children

(NAEYC), International Reading Association, Even Start, and the Primary Literacy Standards were reviewed and where appropriate, integrated into the Missouri Standards and Indicators of Family Literacy Program Quality. The Project Director also worked to integrate FLIPQ with newly created Standards for Early Literacy, a project sponsored by Missouri's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Division of Early Childhood Education.

# PROGRAM QUALITY STANDARDS

## General Program Design and Administration

Programs demonstrating high quality:

- Use content standards and curriculum frameworks that focus on the knowledge and skills adults need to carry out life roles and meet community needs.
- Use developmentally appropriate standards and curriculum frameworks that focus on the knowledge and skills children need to be successful in school.
-  Enhance children's exposure to and concepts about print and literacy.
- Attend to developmental needs of each individual adult through effective curriculum social services referrals, and the elimination of any barriers to participation.
- Address barriers to participation in a variety of ways, i.e.,
  - flexible hours,
  - transportation assistance,
  - convenient sites, and
  -  Siblings care.
- Maintain appropriate staff/student ratios for instruction in each component area.

## Collaboration

Programs demonstrating high quality:

- Work with collaborating agencies to integrate their efforts to ensure the success of their common goals and services.
- Have an advisory board which is representative of the community and meets on a scheduled basis with a minimum of two meetings per year to review program planning.

## Staff Selection

Programs demonstrating high quality:

- Assure that the program has procedures in place to recruit and employ staff with appropriate education, licensure, skills, cultural, language, and background or experience.

## Staff Development

Programs demonstrating high quality:

- Develop and implement an organizational training plan that offers comprehensive family literacy training that meets the individual staff and programmatic needs.
- Support participation in staff development by providing paid time off and flexible scheduling.
- Collaborate with agencies to maximize training resources to promote mutual understanding of programs.
- Provide supervision, training, guidance, and resources to volunteers.
- Evaluate staff development in terms of meeting the National Staff Development Standards

## Intake and Orientation

Programs demonstrating high quality:

- Assess community needs to identify and target families in most need of family literacy services.
- Assist individuals to make informed choices by having staff members discuss program participation requirements and available services individually with prospective.
- Use an established procedure to match family needs with program services.
- Provide confidentiality procedures for families.

## Physical Environment

Programs demonstrating high quality:

- Meet state requirements for health and safety.

- Are accessible to people with disabilities.

- Provide adequate space and appropriate furnishings for each program component.

- Provide adequate space and appropriate furnishings for program administration and instructional planning.

## Emotional/Psychological Environment

Programs demonstrating high quality:

- Provide a non-threatening, positive climate for families.

- Establish a learning-centered environment.

## Curriculum Design

Programs demonstrating high quality:

- Systematically promote the transfer of acquired skills and knowledge to the home and community.

- Respond to participants' cultural diversity.

- Reflect respect for the native language and culture of each family.

- Accommodate differences in goals, learning styles, experiences, development, and culture.

- Address the learners' immediate needs.

- Use instructional materials that are culturally and linguistically appropriate to learners and include authentic items (i.e., newspapers, forms, magazine articles, etc.).

- Use instructional materials that reflect the context of the adult student's life, including work place learning experiences.

- Use a curriculum that supports parents' use of the language in which they are most fluent as a means of effectively stimulating their young children's interest in developmentally-appropriate literacy activities.
- Create instruction that is directly and explicitly connected to adults' individual goals.
- Value a wide variety of outcomes for adult learners such as:
  - obtaining driver's license,
  - reading to children, or
  - obtaining a high school diploma.
- Use a mix of methods for instruction, including activities such as:
  - self-directed independent learning,
  - computer-aided instruction,
  - cooperative learning, and
  - individual tutoring.

## Integration of Components

**Program Standards**

- Identify and continually reinforce common messages to be emphasized across components, for example, the:
  - value of literacy,
  - importance of the application and transfer of skills,
  - role of experience in development,
  - importance of practice,
  - use of individual strengths,
  - central role of the parent in a child's development
- Involve staff from all program components to plan an integrated curriculum.
- Fiscally compensate all team members to meet together at least once per week, in addition to individual prep time, for program planning and integration.

**Program Quality Indicators**

- The project meets all of the four following intensity standards per month:
    - 60 hours adult education;
    - 80 hours early childhood education;
    - 20 hours parenting education;
    - 20 hours PACT Time.
- All core components are made available to participants year round.

# Retention

**Program Standards**

- Staff uses at least three different strategies to retain families who do not meet program standards for attendance, behavior, achievement, and participation.
- Provide opportunities for past and present participants to assume paraprofessional roles within the program, i.e., to mentor, volunteer or be employed.

**Program Quality Indicator**

- 60% of families enrolled participate a minimum of ten months; 30% a minimum of seven months; 10% a minimum of four months.

# Transitions from Family Literacy

**Program Standards**

- Engage staff and families together for planning transition support.
- Prepare for transitions of children by working with school or community programs.
- Provide opportunities for adults to explore a range of post-family literacy options.
- Plan comprehensive transition services to continue when service delivery mechanisms or family eligibility change.

**Program Quality Indicator**

- 80% of families with children ages birth to eight years old who will experience a transition during the program year, will participate in at least two transition activities in a program year as measured by sign-in sheets, self-reporting, or portfolio documentation.

# Program Evaluation

**Program Standards**

- Develop an evaluation plan to assess, through thorough objective measurement and systematic analysis, whether the program demonstrates continuous improvement.
- Collects quantitative and qualitative data to demonstrate whether the program achieves the purposes for which it was funded.
- Use reliable and valid evaluation methods appropriate to the program goals and objectives.
- Share evaluation findings and recommendations with participating families, staff, community and statewide collaborators, the local school district, and state and federal legislative representatives.

**Program Quality Indicators**

- A written evaluation report compliant with the Missouri standards and indicators is sent to the Even Start state coordinator within 30 days of the end of the year.
- The report is an analysis of quantitative and qualitative data collected to determine the extent of the accomplishments of the program goals associated with the program process, output, outcomes, and impacts.
- The report documents and supports continuous local program improvement.

# COMPONENT

## QUALITY STANDARDS AND INDICATORS

### Parent and Child Together (PACT) Time

**Component Definition:** PACT Time consists of regularly scheduled opportunities for parents and their children to play and work together as a way to promote literacy and language development. PACT activities build adult understanding of the critical role parents play in positive adult-child interactions.

**Program Standards**

PACT interactions:

1. Are provided at least 20 hours per month, 12 of which are literacy based.

2. Provide opportunities for parents to practice new strategies in a supportive environment where teachers model, coach, and encourage learning strategies.

3. Provide parents with materials and techniques to support their children's learning and development.

4. Enhance parents' awareness of how children learn and specifically how their own child learns best.

5. Are child-focused.

**Performance Indicators**

1. Families participate in PACT Time monthly.

2a. Interactive literacy activities occur within each PACT Time (story-reading, story-telling, and retelling, singing, finger plays).

2b. Programs collect and display students' work.

3a. Staff observe parents applying strategies discussed during parenting sessions.

3b. Staff provide a print rich literacy environment.

4a. Parents focus on child's interest during play.

4b. Parents listen to and communicate with their child.

4c. Parents express reasonable expectations for children's development.

4d. Staff reflect with parents following parent-child experiences.

## Parenting Education

**Component Definition:** Parenting Education provides information, instruction, and support for parents regarding how to be their child's first teacher and full partner in the education of their children.

### Program Standards

Parenting Education:

1. Parenting education is provided 20 hours per month, 8 of which are literacy based.
2. Expands parents' knowledge of child development and increases their ability to establish developmentally-appropriate expectations for their children.
3. Expands knowledge of language, literacy, and cognitive development.
4. Recognizes individual strengths of parents (i.e., patience, humor, energy, responsibility, etc.) while learning parenting skills(i.e., stress management, alternatives to corporal punishment, positive communication techniques, etc.)
5. Expand knowledge and use of school and community resources.

### Performance Indicators

90% of parents will affect their child's ability to learn as evidenced by informal assessment and self-assessment in two or more of the following:

1. Parents participate in parenting education monthly.

2a. Provide support and encourage structure for the home learning environment.

2b. Select books, toys, and activities, based on the child's interests and abilities.

3a. Talk with and read to their children

3b. Support children's decision making skills;

3c. Listen to children and encourage the expression of ideas.

4.   Identify their own strengths and those of their children.

5a. Increase awareness of school expectations.

5b. Communicate effectively with school personnel

5c. Advocate for their children.

5d. Demonstrate preparation and continuous involvement in children's school activities such as conferences, meetings, home visits, and volunteer opportunities.

## Adult Education

**Component Definition:**  Adult Education provides the information and instruction necessary to support the improvement of literacy and learning skills in adult learners. ("Literacy skills" are defined as the adults' ability to read, and speak in English, and compute and solve problems at levels of proficiency needed to fulfill responsibilities as parents/family members, citizens/community members, and workers.) The adult education component also works in concert with the other family literacy components to support adults' transfer of acquired skills and knowledge to their home and community.

**Program Standards**

1.  Academic content is taught within a functional context, and promotes critical thinking.

2.  Student informal and formal assessment is conducted and analyzed on regular basis, consistent with state AEL requirements, and based on student needs and goals.

3.  Learning environment is appropriate, comfortable for adults, and adult-centered.

4.  Classroom environments are language-rich with multiple opportunities for literacy experiences, encouraging problem solving, communication and reasoning.

5. Instruction integrates scientifically based reading research (SBRR) strategies with content relevant to student's goals (i.e., family, personal, work).

6. Instructional materials reflect the context of the adult student's life, with a priority on the use of authentic resources. (i.e., newspapers, forms, workplace items, etc.)

7. Program format, schedule, location, and entry options are flexible to maximize support for adult learners.

8. Staff is trained to assist adults with learning difficulties and/or documented learning disabilities.

9. Staff is trained in ways to implement scientifically based reading research strategies within the classroom.

**Performance Indicators for Adult Learning (required)**

1. 50% of adults who have completed at least 100 hours of AEL instruction will demonstrate a gain of at least one grade equivalent level on the TABE or CASAS(reading or math) based on their entry level assessment scores.

2. The percent of adult learners enrolled in Beginning Literacy who complete that level will meet or exceed 23%.

3. The percent of adult learners enrolled in Beginning Basic Education who complete that level will meet or exceed 30%.

4. The percent of adult learners enrolled in Low Intermediate Basic Education who complete that level will meet or exceed 33%.

5. The percent of adult learners enrolled in High Intermediate Basic Education who complete that level will meet or exceed 35%.

6. The percent of adult learners enrolled in Low Adult Secondary Education who complete that level will meet or exceed 48%.

7. The percent of adult learners enrolled in High Adult Secondary Education who complete that level will meet or exceed 50%.

**Performance Indicators for Adult Learning and English as Second Language (ESL)**

1.  50% of adults who have completed at least 100 hours of ESOL instruction will demonstrate at least a five (5) point gain on the CASAS Reading test based on their entry level assessment score.

2. The percent of adult learners enrolled in Beginning ESOL Literacy who complete that level will meet or exceed 18%.

3. The percent of adult learners enrolled in Beginning ESOL who complete that level will meet or exceed 20%.

4. The percent of adult learners enrolled in Low Intermediate ESOL who complete that level will meet or exceed 22%.

5. The percent of adult learners enrolled in High Intermediate ESOL who complete that level will meet or exceed 22%.

6. The percent of adult learners enrolled in Low Advanced ESOL who complete that level will meet or exceed 22%.

7. The percent of adult learners enrolled in High Advanced ESOL who complete that level will meet or exceed 22%.


**Performance Indicators for Adult Work and Education Progress (required)**

1.  30% of adult learners attending at least 12 hours who had a primary or secondary goal to enter  postsecondary education or vocational training will meet their goal.

2. 40% of unemployed adult learners attending at least 12 hours who had a primary or secondary goal to obtain employment will obtain unsubsidized employment.

3. 40% of currently employed adult learners attending at least 12 hours who had a primary or secondary goal of improved or retained employment will retain or advance in employment.

4. 60% of adult learners will stay active until goals are met.

**Performance Indicators for GED Completion (required)**

1. 50% of adult learners at the Low and High Adult Secondary Education levels who complete a minimum of 100 hours and have a high school equivalency as a goal will pass the GED or earn a high school credential.

# Children's Education

**Component Definition:** Children's education promotes young children's growth and development, engages parents in their child's educational program by nuturing meaningful involvement, and relating the importance of parents' role in their children's development and achievement

Young children who are living in circumstances that place them at greater risk of school failure (including poverty, low level of maternal education, maternal depression, and other factors) are much more likely to succeed in school if they attend well-planned, high quality children's education programs. Ideally, the children's education component uses a curriculum that focuses on the whole child and emphasizes the development of literacy.

**Program Standards**

1. Physical environment meets and, ideally, exceeds the minimum required standards for certification and licensure.
2. Class sizes and adult-child ratios will meet or exceed those required for certification and licensure.
3. Program creates and supports positive attitudes toward literacy and learning in young children.
4. Program reflects commitment to children in the professional development and support of its teachers.
5. Classroom environment is language-rich with many opportunities for literacy experiences and child-focused learning.

6. Staff is well qualified, trained in child development, and has appropriate certification by state requirements.

7. Program utilizes appropriate on-going assessment techniques to evaluate learning and adjust instruction.

**Performance Indicators for Child Readiness (required)**

1. Of those 3 to 5 year old children who participate in at least 80 hours of early childhood instruction, 75% will improve as measured by standardized language and early literacy assessment.

2. 80% of children ages birth to five years old from native English speaking background who have been enrolled in the program for at least seven months will demonstrate continuous progress in language development and literacy with a pre-assessment within one month of enrollment and a post-assessment no sooner than six months thereafter using an age-appropriate language/literacy assessment that is also appropriate for second language students yield development age scores.

3. 60% of Even Start children, ages five to eight, who have been in the program for at least seven months, will demonstrate progress in a given school year in reading readiness or reading using any district wide administered standardized norm-referenced achievement test or district wide alternative assessment instruments.

**Performance Indicators for Child Attendance (required)**

1. 80% or more of the four to five year old/pre-school children attending a family literacy early childhood center and enrolled four months or longer in Even Start will attend an average of 60 hours per month or more in early childhood and PACT activities combined.

2. After seven months of family participation in family literacy, 80% of children in public school grade K-3 will have attended school at the same or better rate

as the building attendance rate reported in school records.

**Performance Indicators for Child Promotion (required)**
    1. After seven months of family participation in Even Start, 90% of Even Start children, ages five to eight enrolled in school, will be promoted to the next grade level each school year as measured by school records.

# Home Visits

**Component Definition:** Home visits are linked to all other program components. The home visit is used as an opportunity for the parent and child to learn and play together with literacy as a primary focus.

**Program Standards**
1. Program recognizes that some families may require a transition period before they are comfortable with and committed to home visits.
2. Alternate locations, such as libraries, are utilized as home visit sites if the family is initially uncomfortable with the visit occurring in the home. Such locations should be familiar to and comfortable for the family and allow for focused interaction.
3. Materials and approaches for the home visit are tailored for each family.
4. Home visitors demonstrate sensitivity to family culture and respect family boundaries.
5. Ideally, home visitors speak the first language of the family or involve collaborators who share the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of families.
6. The home visitor encourages parental participation during home visit by planning activities for the visit with the parent.
7. The home visitor is also attuned to the needs and concerns of the parent and responds to these concerns with appropriate information, support, or referrals to

collaborating agencies.

8. Home visitors model interactions and reinforcements and encourage parent's development of developmentally-appropriate expectations of his/her child.

9. Staff development for home visitors includes team debriefing of experiences they have had in the home, and preparation of other staff members who may conduct home visits with families.

10. Both supervisory staff and home visitor training supports home visitors in setting boundaries within which they provide information and assistance to families.

**Program Quality Indicators**

1. Families receive at least one home visit a month for every month of program participation.

2. Home visitors receive on-going professional development.